

MASKS AND YOUNG CHILDREN

Face masks or coverings, when used safely and properly, can act as a barrier to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They are used as a public health measure to keep everyone safe.

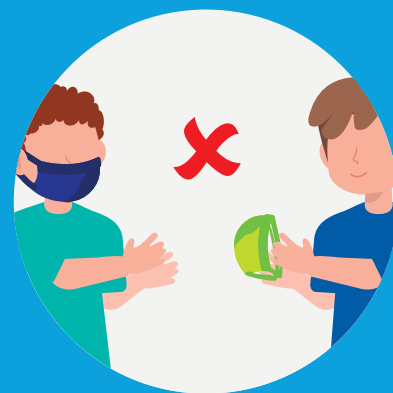
Face masks or coverings are mandatory in Ontario schools for students in Grades 1 to 12 including in hallways and during classes, on school transportation, and during outdoor recess where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Wearing a face mask or covering should be combined with other public health measures including practicing physical distancing, cleaning hands regularly, staying home when sick and coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow.



Tips for wearing a face mask or covering

- Avoid touching the mask or your face while wearing it
- Do not share or swap your mask with others
- Consider sending your child with extra masks so they can be changed throughout the day if they get wet or dirty
- Ensure the mask fits your child's face properly (mask should fit snugly without any gaps) and they consistently keep the mask over their mouth and nose. Masks should not be left partly on or left hanging around the neck.
- Disposable masks should not be stored or reused for more than one day
- Wet or dirty reusable masks should be stored in a sealed plastic bag
- Reusable cloth masks should be washed in hot and soapy water and fully dried before wearing it again



Mask use for young children

The benefits and risks of prolonged mask wearing in young children is not clear. Some young children can safely put on, take off and store their own mask. Others may struggle to follow the proper mask-wearing precautions without the support of an adult and will be placed at greater risk of being exposed to the virus through improper handling and wearing of a mask.

Wearing a mask for many hours, especially in warm classrooms, may be challenging for a young child. They may frequently adjust it or touch their face. Young children with communication difficulties, those who are learning English as a second language and others, may experience additional difficulties wearing a mask in the classroom.

An important consideration for deciding to send your young child to school with a mask is whether they can wear the mask for many hours and put it on and take it off properly without adult assistance. Children who can safely put on, take off and store their own mask without adult assistance are encouraged to wear a mask in the school setting.

How to talk to your child about wearing masks

Seeing people in masks may take some getting used to. Let your child know that many people at school including teachers, principals, older students and some younger students will be wearing masks. If your child finds masks scary, reassure your child and remind them that masks are worn to protect others from the COVID-19 virus. Some of their favourite superheroes and cartoon characters wear masks too! Remind your child that some people may not be able to wear a mask for medical reasons.



Stay COVID-smart!
Do your part to stop the spread!



How you can help your child wear a mask

- If you choose to send your young child to school with a mask, practice putting on and taking off the mask and make sure they are able to put it on and take it off themselves. Start with wearing a mask for a few minutes and increase the time each day
- Help your child get used to masks by wearing them together
- Help make it fun by letting your child choose a mask with a fun pattern
- You may have to try a few different kinds of masks to learn which kind your child finds most comfortable

HOW TO PUT ON A MASK



1. Wash your hands with soap and water for 15 seconds or use hand sanitizer



2. Put the mask on your face. Pick up face covering by the loops and place them around your ears



3. Make sure it covers your nose, mouth and chin



4. Even though it's hard, DON'T touch the mask while it's on your face

HOW TO TAKE OFF A MASK

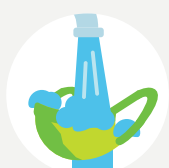
Do not touch the front of your mask to remove it; only use the ear loops to take your mask off.



1. Before taking your mask off, wash your hands with soap and water for 15 seconds or use hand sanitizer



2. If you're wearing a throwaway mask, only hold the loops or ties and place it in a garbage bin

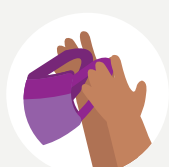


3. If you're wearing a cloth mask, make sure it is washed after each use and place safely in a bag in between uses



4. After taking your mask off, wash your hands with soap and water for 15 seconds or use hand sanitizer

HOW TO STORE A MASK



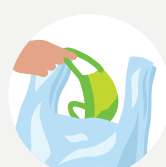
1. Fold the mask in half so that the outer surface of the mask is inwards and against itself



2. Make sure the outer surface does not touch or fold against the inner surface



3. If you are going to put the mask back on after recess or after eating, place in a clean, individually labelled paper bag



4. If your reusable mask is wet or dirty or you are bringing the reusable mask home to wash at the end of the day, place in a plastic bag



5. If your throwaway mask is wet or dirty, throw it out in a garbage bin



6. Clean your hands again. Wash your hands with soap and water for 15 seconds or use hand sanitizer.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES